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## ONE OF THE TWO

" Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

## PART I

The Spirit whose business it is to proclaim the birth of human souls once announced the following message to the court of heaven : "A new soul has just been born on earth."

Instantly the King of Heaven said: 1 ' Who will volunteer to look after this soul and preserve its purity, and help it to grow up in goodness and strength ?"

Then the most lovely being in all heaven stood up and said: " I will go." This being's name was Good Influence.

His form was that of an angel, and his hand was that of a mother; and the King of Heaven, satisfied with this volunteer, said: " Go; and do battle for this new-born soul." So the bright being, Good Influence, came to the earth where we live.

At exactly the same time the messenger, whose business it is to announce the birth of human souls to the court of Hell, proclaimed in the same words: "A new soul has just been born on earth."

Then the King of Hell said: "Who will volunteer to look after this soul, and destroy its peace and purity and help to make it another creature fit for this abode of darkness?"

And immediately stood up the ugliest being in all Hell's dominions and said: "I will go."

This being's name was Bad Influence. His brow was black as midnight, his eye glared with madness, his tongue dropped venom. His form was the form of a monster, although sometimes he could disguise it to look like an angel of light, and his hand was the hand of a spider. And the King of Hell, well pleased with such a volunteer, smiled grimly and said: "Go, and success attend thee." So the dark being called Bad Influence came to the earth where we live. -

Now it chanced that, on their way to this new-born soul, these two spirits, one an Angel and the other a Demon, fell in with each other. Whereupon began a very curious conversation between them.

"Where art thou going?" called out Bad Influence to Good Influence, who left a track of gleaming white behind him as he glided through space.

Then the Angel drew back a little from the Demon and said: "I am on my way to help a newborn soul on

earth."

"Just where I am going," grinned the Demon. "How lucky! Perhaps we are going to the same soul."

"Demon," replied the Angel, earnestly, ' 'I trust not. However, I fear me much that it is so. What is the name of the soul to whom thou art going ?"

Then the Demon told him.

"Alas! It is the same!" cried Good Influence, sorrowfully.

" But why dost thou torment this soul ? Leave it to me."

' 'Not so," sneered the other. ' 'I have as much right to it as thou hast. I am sent by my King."

"And I by mine," answered the Angel. " But what good will it do thee to win this soul?"

"What good?" retorted the other. "Not any good ; but I shall be rewarded by my Master and have a greater place in his kingdom."

" But my Master has sent me to this soul and has promised me a large reward if I win it. So I am determined to get what I came for."

"Get it if thou canst!" replied the Demon with a contemptuous sneer. " It will listen to me much quicker than it will to thee, see if it doesn't."

" Ah, I hope not," cried the Angel, and a tear fell from his eye that dropped down through space like a falling star, as he replied, "Not if my prayers and my tears can save it from thee."

" Much good may prayers and tears do!" said the

Demon derisively. " Come, what wilt thou wager that at the end of twenty-one years this soul is mine ?"

Then the Angel of Light confronted the Demon of Darkness and said, sternly: "We will have no unholy bargains nor wagers in this matter. Already do I look upon this new-born soul as mine own. Thou art but an evil meddler in this matter."

"Nevertheless, I am more powerful than thou art," said Bad Influence, " and I give thee warning that I shall count this soul mine from the very start."

' And I give the warning," replied Good Influence, " that I am thine enemy in everything thou doest in the place where we are going. This soul shall be mine."

"It shall be mine," echoed Bad Influence, and he darted faster towards the place where the new-born soul lived; but he was not any quicker than Good Influence, who followed so swiftly that it would have been hard to tell which one reached the soul first.

Meanwhile the new-born soul, all unconscious of what these two powerful beings from other worlds were going to do, lay sleeping in a cradle in all the pure innocence and harmless-ness of guiltless babyhood. It did not yet know the meaning of those great words, " right" and " wrong," " good " and "bad," "holy" and "evil," "pure" and "impure." It lay there without any knowledge of life as it was to be. All that it existed for was to eat, to sleep, and to play; an animal as yet, with no care, no responsibility, no selfishness, no sorrow for

sin, no triumphing over passion. Ah, little soul, how tender and heavenly seems thy peaceful sleep now ! Nearest approach to anything divine in this wicked world, a new-born soul! Can we ever outgrow the feeling of awe which creeps over us at the mystery of human birth, at the thought of the tremendous conflict so soon to begin on the part of what now looks like a fleshly blossom, which we would wish might be kept fair and unstained forever? But the Creator has not willed it so. Sleep on, beautiful soul, innocence incarnate, thy waking shall find sterner, harder facts of life than the soft pillow on which thy head now slumbers! The Angel and the Demon never sleep. Which one shall claim thee for its own twenty-one years from now ? "

In the contest which was now to occur it was intensely interesting to see how Good Influence and Bad Influence went to work to win this soul, each for his own master. Good Influence bought the most attractive house in town, fitting it up in the most exquisite taste, and lighting it with the most attractive and glowing lamps of beauty. Then he sat down and laid out the following campaign to be followed for the next twenty-one years:

- 1.To win this soul I must spare neither time nor expense. I must be always present in emergencies, in turning-points of life, in time of hardship and discouragement.

2. I must make a personal friend of this soul. I cannot expect to win it unless I love it.
3. I must have faith in my Master and in his power, even when Bad Influence seems to be getting the better.
4. I must make my acquaintance with this soul in childhood in order to win its friendship in youth.
5. I must guard against the devices of Bad Influence by every means in my power. I must never sleep on my post. I must keep up with the times in order to win this soul.
6. Everything in my possession must be made as free and easy of access as possible to this soul. I must not make it too hard nor too costly a thing for the soul to get acquainted with me.
7. I must make the one business of the next twenty-one years the winning of this soul. Nothing else shall get between me and that result. Either I shall accomplish what I undertake or I shall rest satisfied that Bad Influence has more at his disposal with which to win a soul than I have.

That was the Angel's plan. The Demon, for his part, bought a very attractive-looking house—on the outside—and he furnished it elegantly, but wickedly. Everything that could debauch and destroy purity and strength were to be found within those walls. Then, after he had finished all to his satisfaction, he likewise

sat down and made out the following plan of campaign for the next twenty-one years:

## THE DEMON'S PLAN

1. To win this soul it is very evident that I must know it. To do that I shall make an exhaustive study of its parentage, its home surroundings, its weaknesses, inherited and otherwise, and know in detail every personal habit.
2. I must make it seem to this soul that I have a great fondness for it. In reality, of course, I do not care anything about it, but flattery and good fellowship will pass very often for esteem and friendship.
3. I shall spare no expense in the manner of winning this soul. Everything which money can buy or luxury invent shall be freely at the disposal of this soul from the very beginning.
4. I must use my art every day in the week to win the soul; there must be no breathing-places, no vacations. I must be always ready to take advantage of Good Influence in this way.
5. The sooner I begin to acquire power over the soul the better. The child will be more easily moulded than the man.
6. I shall call to my assistance all the other souls in this town. That will be an easy matter with many of them.
7. I must make the one absorbing object of the next

twenty-one years the winning of this soul. I shall turn aside for nothing. I shall not be discouraged. I shall fight Good Influence to the death. I am determined to win this soul for my Master. To do it I shall work miracles and do battle with the Almighty Himself. I will do what I purpose or be annihilated in the endeavor.

You see, the two plans are much alike in their general outline; but notice, now, how the two went to work to accomplish their ends.

While the new-born soul was sleeping, not yet able to understand what was coming or what desperate measures had been taken for its destruction and preservation, Good Influence went out and canvassed the town for help. He found a number of persons of his own way of thinking. He told them the story of his coming and showed how a new-born soul was at stake in the matter. As a result of his canvassing, he succeeded in getting three institutions started, a Church, a Home, and a Schoolhouse. These three institutions stood in the Angel's sight for what the soul would need when it grew up, and he smiled when he looked at the church spire, as he heard the school bell, and as he looked in upon the family seated about a center table, reading, writing and enjoying healthful sports. He said to himself, with a smile, "I have begun well."

But all this time Bad Influence was wide awake. He also made a canvass of the town and started several places



where liquor could be bought; he trained several men and boys to swear and tell low stories about the street-corners and in other places; he laid in an extra large quantity of vile tobacco and bad pictures to be used when the newborn soul was old enough to be invited to his house, and he succeeded in getting a large number of trashy books and papers into town and made a good start with several mottoes which he had printed and scattered about, among them the following:

"Money is the only thing worth getting." "The Church is a den of hypocrites." "Look out for No. 1 and you will succeed." "There is no God, no future, and no punishment for wrong-doing."

"Take life easy and get all you can out of your neighbor. That is the only true philosophy."

After putting one of these mottoes into every front dooryard and dropping one at every street-corner, Bad Influence glanced up at the church steeple with a sneer and said: "I think I have spiked that gun pretty well. Ah, newborn soul, thou art mine fast enough!"

During the next few years, while the new-born soul was slowly awaking to a knowledge of good and bad, these two beings, Good Influence and Bad Influence, were getting ready for the time when they could approach the soul and win it.

When Good Influence helped to start a revival, Bad Influence waited until it was over and then made fun of

it and called the church a nuisance for having so many meetings.

When the Angel bought a good book and gave it to somebody, the Demon laid in a stock of cheap Sunday newspapers and gave them away. If one encouraged some enterprise for building up the town socially or morally, the other discouraged it on the score of wasteful, needless expense. Good Influence once built at his own charges a beautiful public building called a "Weekly Prayer Meeting," and Bad Influence went to work in the night and undermined the walls with the help, strange as it may seem, of some of the church people, so that the institution was seriously damaged and is not fully repaired even to this day. In spite of all this, Good Influence never lost heart, or, if he did, he kept right on in his determination to win the soul now so fast growing into the knowledge of the moral universe.

In like manner Bad Influence, often seriously thwarted in his plans, never seemed to lose hope, but waited patiently for the most fitting opportunity to make the personal acquaintance of the soul now grown into a youth.

Now, as it happened, Good Influence was fortunate enough to seize the first opportunity of getting acquainted with the soul it had come to win. Bad Influence never went out of town, but one day he was laid up with a disgusting sickness on account of two

remarkable conversions which had occurred in the next house to his own. It is no wonder that Bad Influence had to go to bed, because one of these converted persons was a confirmed drunkard and the other was a pronounced infidel. So while Bad Influence was groaning at home, Good Influence went out and found the soul alone and boldly walked up to it and introduced himself.

' You may not know me by name, but I have a life interest in you and have been waiting these years to make myself known to you. I have come a long distance to get acquainted with you, Soul."

" Have you ? How far ? "

"All the way from Heaven. My King sent me to help you grow up in strength and purity. I have watched your life so far with the greatest interest."

" Is that so! " exclaimed the Soul in astonishment. " Why, what difference does it make to you how I grow up or live?"

" It makes more difference than you can ever know," said the Angel, earnestly. " So far, I am quite sure you have been influenced to very much that is right and true. The church and the home and the schoolhouse have all had their place in your thoughts and I started those influences, all unknown to you, when you were a helpless baby. But it is beginning to be different now-There are times, I feel quite sure, when you want to break away from these three influences. You are

beginning to feel a little ashamed of going to Sunday-school. You are accustomed to say to yourself: 'It is a place for girls and little children.' But why do I speak of this ? I do not wish to find occasion for blame in this, my first talk with you. I came particularly to-day to invite you to visit me at my home. Will you? "

"What for?"

" To get better acquainted with me," said the Angel, with a smile so bright and winning that the Soul said at once: ' 'All right! I'll come. When? "

" Now," replied Good Influence. " No time like the everlasting now."

So they went along together and Good Influence rejoiced greatly that he had the start of Bad Influence. He led his guest into his house and feasted him royally. Then they strolled about the grounds and the soul was amazed at the extent and variety of his new friend's possessions. In the house, the library proved to be the best and most useful that money could buy, but the Soul noticed one book which was duplicated a hundred times and was to be found in every room and on every table. The name of this book was "Holy Bible," and the Soul asked: 1 ' Why do you keep so many Bibles in your house? "

"Because," replied Good Influence, ' 'no other book contains so much wisdom, so much comfort and so much revelation. I keep a large number of copies to give away. It is the best gift I can make you. I pray you

to take a copy. It will be ' a light to your feet and a lamp to your path.' I have reserved the finest copy in the house for you. Take it and read it for your life."

The Soul took the Bible and promised to read it. After a little longer visit with Good Influence it rose to go.

„Promise me one thing," said Good Influence, "that you will come again tomorrow. I have not shown you half nor a quarter of the things of interest and use in and about the house."

' I promise," said the Soul.

' One more word," said the Angel, following his guest to the door. " Let me warn you of a being called Bad Influence who will do his best to harm you in every way. Have nothing to do with him in any case. He will only be a curse to you in everything. Above all, if you meet him, do not let him get your Bible. Hold on to that and you will be all right. But the minute you let go of that or he succeeds in cheating you out of it, you will be in his power. Believe me, I say all this for your good. Don't you believe it?"

"Indeed, I do," replied the Soul, moved by the earnestness and affection with which the Angel spoke.

"And you will come again to-morrow?" continued Good Influence, with winsome look.

" You have treated me so generously I must come again, if it were only to thank you," replied the Soul, also with a smile, and so it went its way. And as for Good Influence, he put down in a book which he carried for

the purpose these words: "A good day's work. Surely this soul shall be mine if I have but patience."

### PART III

Now Bad Influence was not so desperately sick but that he could limp to the window, and it chanced that, just as he was looking out, he caught sight of the Soul coming away from the residence of Good Influence, for the two houses were less than a block apart. Then the Demon grew quite mad with rage as he saw the high and noble look on the Soul's face and realized that it had been in the house of Good Influence long enough to get a look very much better than usual. He was so much enraged to think that the Angel had the start of him that he came very near rushing out as he was and inviting the soul to come to see him. But on second thought (for he was a very cunning old fellow) he decided not to go out without first putting on one of his disguises. So he pulled out of a closet where he kept such things, a suit, that he hurriedly put on, and which made him look like a handsome young man instead of what he actually was, an ugly old being several thousand years old. Going downstairs, for by this time he had quite recovered from his sickness, he opened the front door and stepped out just as the Soul was going by.

"A fine day," said Bad Influence, boldly. "I see you have

been calling on my neighbor yonder. Trust you had a pleasant visit."

"I did, most certainly," answered the Soul. "I was never better entertained in all my life."

"What sort of a house has he?" asked the Demon, concealing a sneer under a smile.

"A handsome house, beautifully furnished. I am going again tomorrow. I did not have time to see half the wonderful things there."

'The owner of the house is a pleasant person?'

'Delightful! Besides he is very generous. He gave me this book,' and the Soul showed the Bible Good Influence had given him.

'A handsome book,' said Bad Influence, hypocritically.

"But I have several books more readable than that. I should be pleased to have you step in some time and look at my library. You have never called on me yet. Won't you come in now? I was just going for a walk, -but it will give me much pleasure to show you over the house and grounds. It is a long time since I have seen a face to which I feel drawn as I do to yours. Come, let us go in and get better acquainted with each other."

"Who are you?" asked the Soul, a little uneasily, for he thought he had caught a glimpse of something very frightful under the speaker's tall hat— for it is one of the truest facts that the devil's disguises are never quite perfect.

"Why, my name is Influence," replied the Demon,

telling half the truth, "and a good name it is, too. But come in and get better acquainted with me and we shall be good friends."

At this point a strain of music was heard from the house and the front door swung open as if by chance, but really at a secret sign given by Bad Influence to one of the servants within, and disclosed a handsome-looking staircase and, beyond, through another open door at the end of the hall, a garden filled with tropical plants and fruits.

Then the Soul followed its new friend up the steps and into the house and the door closed behind them. Just as they were going in, Good Influence, who had hardly finished writing the words of his journal, looked out of his window and saw the Soul going into the other house. And he sat down and wept bitterly, until he happened to think; "Oh, but he had the Bible with him in his hand! If he keeps that he will not come to harm!" Nevertheless, he watched anxiously for the Soul to come out again.

Meanwhile, Bad Influence and the Soul advanced into the house. And the Soul gradually laid aside the suspicion it had had and began to look about and admire and wonder at the things it saw in the house.

Now, Bad Influence had fitted up his house cunningly for the special purpose of winning the Soul by degrees. There were certain rooms where he would no more have dared to take the Soul on its first visit than he



would have dared to murder it on the open street. There were rooms known as Murder, Drunkenness, Blasphemy, Licentiousness and Cruelty, which, if the Soul had seen on this, its first visit, would have frightened it away forever. Knowing this very well, the Demon led his guest into a room called Physical Temptations, out of which opened another large room called Freedom from Religious Restraints, and that yet again into a corridor known as The Way of Death.

Sitting down in the room of Physical Temptations, Bad Influence called in a servant with liquor and cigars.

" I have never used these things," said the Soul, shrinking back a little. " I think I would rather not."

' 'Won't hurt you any when you get used to it," replied Bad Influence, lighting a cigar and pouring out a glass of wine that sparkled like fire. "Try them."

Now, the Soul still held the Bible in its right hand. But as Bad Influence held out a cigar and a glass of wine, the Soul laid the Bible down upon the table to take the other things, at which Bad Influence laughed so loud that the Soul was frightened and cried out: "Why do you laugh?"

' 'To think how long you have carried that stupid book in your hand. Let me show you something more entertaining," and, rising, the Demon took from the bookshelf a large book bound very expensively and curiously—for the covers were made of ruined human bodies and the leaves were pasted in with a

preparation compounded from tears and sighs and remorse and misery and guilt many years old. The Soul shuddered as it touched this volume for the first time; but, opening it, was soon absorbed in looking at the scenes there depicted.

The title of the book which the Soul did not see, because it was only dimly visible on the back, was: "Vile Imaginations and Impure Deeds."

Meanwhile, under cover of the smoke which was fast filling the room, Bad Influence quietly slipped the Bible off the table upon the floor, where the Soul could not find it. But a soft, clear light fell from the volume even there, so noticeable that, finally, when the Soul was busy with the new book, the Demon whispered to the servant to take the Bible out of the room, and Bad Influence breathed easier when it was gone.

Suddenly the Soul started up and exclaimed: "I must be going!"

"What? Not yet! We have only just begun to get acquainted!"

"Nevertheless, I must go. I promised them at home to be back at such a time, and see, it is after the hour!"

"Oh, well, you can make some excuse. Tell them you fell asleep somewhere."

"But I have never lied to them at home yet!" cried the Soul in anguish.

"That wouldn't be lying. It would only be a polite explanation to save you disagreeable questions," said

Bad Influence.

Then the Soul arose and looked more keenly at its host, and through the disguise it caught something of the form of the real being he was.

"Where is my Bible?" cried the Soul, looking for it where it had lain on the table.

"Ah, my servant must have put it on the shelf, thinking it was mine. I will look for it." And the Demon arose and pretended to look for it, while the Soul, more and more disturbed, glanced wildly around and saw many horrible things which at first had seemed very different.

"I cannot find it," said the Demon at last, " but you may have this expensive volume in the place of it." And he pointed at the book the Soul had been looking at.

"No! No! Not that!" cried the Soul, blushing and covering his face with his hands. Then, after a moment, he raised his head and looking about in a dazed way, rushed out of the room; into the hall and out of the door without another word. Bad Influence, peering out of the window as the Soul hurried down the steps, smiled with satisfaction and said with an oath, " He will come again! " and he wrote in a book which he kept for the purpose: "A good day's work. I have taught the Soul to drink and poisoned his thoughts with evil and begun to ruin his body. Let Good Influence repair the damage if he can."

And Good Influence, still keeping watch at his window,

saw the Soul coming out and exclaimed sorrowfully:  
"Alas! the Bible is gone, and how changed his once fair and innocent face! What can I do to repair the damage Bad Influence has done? Let me think! Let me think! This soul must be mine! I will not let it go! Gentle Master, teach me wisdom and strength for the next few years."

The Angel knelt and prayed a long time; and finally, so strong was his agony for this soul now in peril of its immortal life, that he decided to return for a brief time to his Master to seek by personal touch the wisdom he felt the need of in his further battle against the Angel of Darkness.

And the Demon likewise, moved by a similar impulse, not knowing the Angel's purpose, decided to return for a swift visit to the master of that realm of evil, in order to counsel with him, and learn more arts to employ for the destruction of this life already being influenced toward the Way of Death.

All Heaven's wisest and best gathered to greet the Angel and to hear his story. With breathless interest they listened to the Angel as he told of his struggle with the Demon. When he was through there was the most profound desire on the part of all to help the Angel in his effort when he should return to renew the conflict.

"Tell me, now!" he cried as he stretched out his hands to Him who sat on the throne as King, "tell me, my Master, what is the greatest influence I can use to win

this soul ?"

Then He answered, He who sat on the throne: "There is no influence equal to love. The ages cannot dim it, and the Demon cannot kill it. Go ! Surround the soul by every influence that has at the heart of it the love which lifts up and glorifies and makes noble. The love which sacrifices and the love which shares. The love which makes selfishness mean and pride ignoble. The love which shapes manhood into highest development and brings to daily growth of all the powers the greatest joy. Go! Bring to bear the Love which is the strongest lever known even to God, to save an immortal soul."

Then the Angel humbled himself before all Heaven and asked if he was worthy. But his Lord smiled and bade him rise, for he had proved his fitness by asking the question, and with all Heaven singing a song of coming victory to cheer him on, he hastened back to earth, bearing the exaltation of Love's strength on his Angel's pinions.

But meanwhile the Demon had confronted his lord and asked the same question.

" Tell me ! What is the greatest influence I can bring to bear on this soul now to win it ? "

Then he who sat on that throne of evil, surrounded by all of those who were like him, answered :

" There is no greater influence than Hate. Go, teach the soul to hate the things that carry crosses with them.

Teach him to fear the things that call for self-denial, because they are irksome. Teach him to hate duty and prayer and the restraints of home that interfere with his freedom. Surround him with those who scoff at the hypocrites in the church, but who never see the true disciples there. Teach him to learn the easy lesson of scorn for right and contempt for purity. Let him learn that the lever which moves the earth is love of money and selfishness in its accumulation. Make him to feel the ease of doing evil compared with the hardship of doing good. Go ! Instill the principle of Hate into this soul and win it for us !"

And the Demon cried aloud in the pride of his exultation at the thought of coming victory: " Yea! Even so, will I compass the soul of this immortal being on earth!" And he hastened as before to the earth and to the spot where the soul had its abiding-place.

Now, it chanced that on their return, as before, the Angel and the Demon fell in with each other.

"Where art thou going? " called out the Demon.

1 ' Back to my beloved soul on earth," answered the Angel. "Bearing to him the Love which all hell cannot destroy. And with it I shall at last win him."

"Ah! In that thou art deceived," cried the Demon, derisively. " I bear back with me a greater influence than thine." He spread his wings wide and disclosed the dreadful figure of Hate which seemed to the Angel to breathe as the Demon breathed, and move as he

moved.

And the Angel made no more reply, but the splendor of Love's effulgence radiated from his wings as he urged them towards earth. Swift to follow came the Demon and, together, they again reached the place of the Soul's abode.

Now the Soul had been agitated since the departure of the Angel and the Demon concerning the next impulse that seemed to be moving within him.

He was drawn by the Angel's win-someness to go and see him again, but he was enticed by the Demon's entertainment to visit him also.

He awoke to a beautiful day and started in the direction of the two houses.

At the end of his path the way divided, and when he reached the parting of the ways he paused, trembling.

All Heaven above looked on, yearning for his choice of the path which led to the Angel's house. All Hell beneath gazed at him, cursing his hesitation.

At this moment the Angel appeared at his door and beckoned. In the same instant the Demon was seen on his threshold reaching out his hand. The Angel's face had never looked so beautiful; the Demon's countenance had never seemed so alluring.

Still he hesitated. He was at the entrance of young life. Still was he clay to be moulded, yet was he at that warm-vital period when either Death or Life might either say, «' He is mine!" when either Love or Hate

might say, "Let him alone! He is for me!"

And he, as he stands there, is my own son, my own friend, my own brother, somewhere in the world. Shall Love win him, or Hate enslave him? Shall the Angel bear him on triumphant pinions to Heaven or shall the Demon snatch him away to add one more to Hell's populace? For the eternal struggle between Love and Hate goes on as the earth rolls round the sun, and whether one or the other wins at last may depend upon my conduct, upon my influence, upon my character; for I myself am either the Angel of Love or the Demon of Hate to some new-born soul of humanity. I myself am one of the two.